

Monday 24 September 2018

Council seeks support for public access to former ABC site

Glen Eira City Council has sought intervention from the Australian Government to stop the imminent sale of an important part of our nation's cultural history. The partnership will see Council working with the appropriate level of Government to make the former ABC site at 8 Gordon Street in Elsternwick, an important part of Glen Eira's cultural future.

Council recently commissioned an independent heritage review of the land and buildings situated at 8 Gordon Street in Elsternwick. It was no surprise to Council that this review emphatically confirmed the site to be of national, state, and local cultural heritage significance.

In addition to the social and cultural significance of the public land and assets, the main studio building, its façade, and the broadcasting tower were deemed to be of primary heritage significance. The independent assessment also revealed the site's strong association with the adjacent Rippon Lea Estate, which saw the beginnings of the heritage conservation and advocacy movement of the National Trust in Victoria.

The main studio, affectionately known as the 'Dream Factory', is the earliest extant ABC television studio in Australia and an iconic part of Australia's history. Commencing with the broadcasting of the Olympic Games in Melbourne in 1956, the studio had far-reaching effects on Australian culture, ideas, identity and society until 2017.

Glen Eira Mayor Cr Tony Athanasopoulos said that the independent report also noted the obligation that the ABC, as an organisation, has towards assets deemed to be historically valuable. It seems to Council that in this instance, that this obligation has been ignored.

"In contrast, Council has taken its heritage obligations seriously and sought urgent heritage protection for the site," he said. "A nomination for the site to be considered for inclusion in the *Victorian Heritage Register* has been submitted."

Cr Athanasopoulos said Australians are at risk of losing this rich part of the nation's cultural history through the ABC's impending sale of the property.

"It would be a travesty if the Government allowed the site to be sold when the opportunity so clearly exists for this land to continue to play an important role developing the arts and creative industries in Melbourne. Council is seeking the Government's support to keep this land in public hands."

Council has requested that a Committee of Management be established, and is willing to form this committee. This will ensure that the following takes place:

- The 'Dream Factory' Studio 31 will continue to operate as Victoria's only soundproof sound stage available for community use.
- A part of the site be dedicated to memorialising the important cultural significance of the place over time.
- A portion of the site be dedicated to the provision of affordable housing.
- A portion of the site be dedicated to public recreation.
- The entirety of the site remains as the asset of the public.
- That the historical elements are protected and enhanced.

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